

TWO-GOAL MERRICK EARNS WANDERERS A POINT AT TOOTING

Tooting and Mitcham 2, Wycombe Wanderers 2

VETERAN winger Len Worley helped Wycombe Wanderers to obtain a lucky point five minutes from time against lowly Tooting on Tuesday evening. From his centre Les Merrick, playing his second game after returning from injury, swept home his second goal of the night.

For long phases of the game Wanderers had looked unimpressive and after a goal-less first half grabbed a shock lead with a freak goal.

Tooting mounted a series of dangerous attacks and the Wycombe defence appeared distinctly vulnerable particularly keeper John Maskell, whose handling left a lot to be desired.

However, it was a different story at the start of the match as Wycombe opened brightly and with a little more accuracy with their finishing could have gone comfortably ahead.

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Both Barry Baker and Keith Samuels were rested because of niggling injuries with Julian Lailey returning to left-half, allowing Dave Thomas to plug Baker's spot with, Viv Busby leading the forwards.

The home side survived Wanderers' opening onslaught and as the game progressed Wycombe's raids became more and more spasmodic. Tooting

began to threaten with a new found conviction in their play and Maskell did well to hold a vicious drive from winger Kelly. But, Maskell already showed early warning signs of his later uncertainty when he dropped a Holder free-kick.

Immediately after the interval Wanderers took a shock lead. Merrick had wandered over to the right, fastened onto a loose ball and his long swerving centre dipped past Fairbrother's outstretched arms.

Within a minute Tooting were level with the finest move of the entire match. Their lively leader Gowland stormed past Faulkner and Rundle to fire home a superb goal from 12-yards.

This injected a new spirit into Tooting's play and Wycombe were certainly lucky to survive until the 80th minute. Maskell was seriously at fault for this goal as

he mis-punched a high Holder centre and Kelly was left with the simple task of slipping the ball in.

To their credit Wanderers still came forward seeking that vital equaliser which Worley created. Incredibly Wycombe could have repeated their 3-2 win of last season at Sandy Lane when, in the closing half-minute, Horseman rounded Fairbrother but saw his shot kicked off the line.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; L. Temel, C. Gale; V. Faulkner, I. Rundle, J. Lailey; L. Worley, D. Thomas, V. Busby, A. Horseman, L. Merrick. Sub: D. Hall